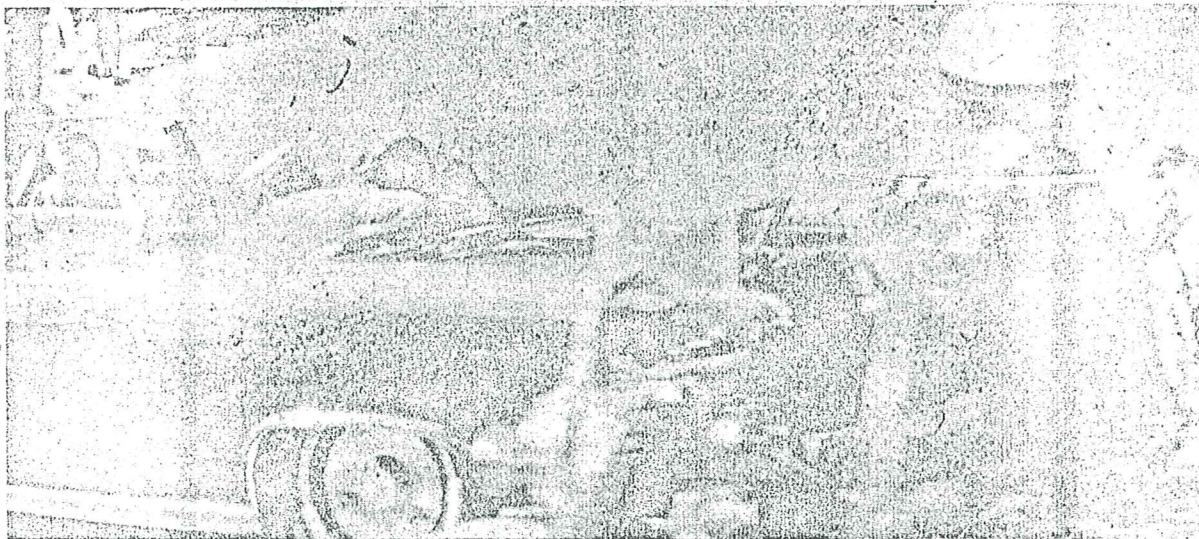


How It Felt To The President of the



A tangle of sharp pain gathered inside Lee Harvey Oswald as he hid his clipboard in a pile of book cartons.

Moving swiftly and efficiently, Lee went to work on the boxes, at last positioning two heavy cartons near the window and bringing two smaller ones over to stack on top of one of them for a rifle rest.

Concentrating on his work, he tried to forget his hurt.

He didn't want to feel it. He didn't care to identify it — for it was an ugly mixture of fear and hostility and self pity.

And now, as he slid the brown paper bag from its hiding place,

he no longer had reason to heed the pain, the disappointment with . . . the hell with it!

No, face it, he told himself. He was disappointed with the Marines, with Russia, with Cuban red tape and with Marina — but mostly with Lee Harvey Oswald, 1653230.

His old Marine serial number! It came out automatically!

He sat down on one of the cartons he had placed by the window. Carefully, he removed the rifle parts from the bag.

Then, after putting the bag on the floor, he spread the smaller pieces out on the brown paper and

began assembling the weapon.

He noticed now that the sky had cleared. Just so there were no strong winds. That was important.

Now each thing he did was magnified a thousandfold. This was the real thing. This was history!

His hands were putting together the instrument that would once and for all blast down the barrier between himself and the world in general, the barrier between him and happiness.

At last he was throwing himself into the struggle! And this time he was resolved to succeed.

Yes, himself, he thought.

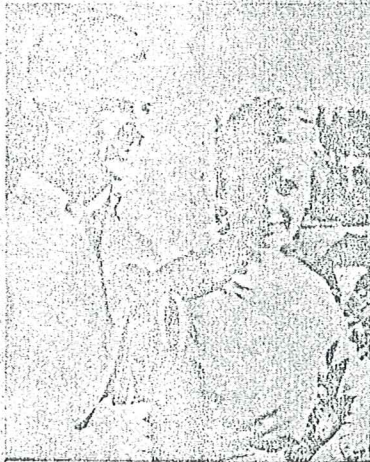
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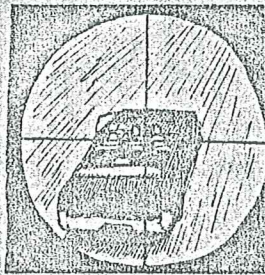
United States..



John F. Kennedy



Lee Harvey Oswald
and Marina



That's the thing this rifle will murder.

Not the President, but Lee Harvey Oswald — the wretched, the suffering and the oppressed.

No room after this act for petty selfish wounds of the spirit. This act will erase petty concerns. Curtain rods! Ha!

And washing machines. Marina had asked him to buy her a washing machine — last night, during the argument. He said he would. Then, cruelly, she told him to save his money. Fine thing.

Curtain rods, washing machines and money. It was all a trap. He should have known

ABOUT the AUTHOR

Kerry Thornley is a young writer who was a Marine Corps buddy of Lee Harvey Oswald, President Kennedy's accused assassin.

This is the last of a series of four articles by Mr. Thornley based on his remembrances of one of the 20th Century's strangest characters.

Thornley, who appeared before the Warren Commission as an expert witness, obviously knew Oswald better than anyone outside the slayer's family — and perhaps even better than they.

MEN'S DIGEST magazine is proud to present this important series of articles which throws light on the personality of Oswald and helps to explain why he killed President Kennedy.

better.

Then, as he leaned the rifle against the pipes that ran up the wall to his left, he realized with a sweeping finality that all his actions of the past had been leading him to this.

How had he been so stupid? Why had insignificant failures bothered him for one moment? He was above all that.

But wait! Someone was nearby! Lee grabbed the rifle and put it on the floor, covering most of it with the bag. Then he crept forward to peer between the cartons that hid his window and view. He held his breath.

Lee relaxed. Just some poor guy eating lunch — chicken and a bottle of pop. Now if that guy just doesn't come over here to watch the parade.

If he does, I'll shoot him. Just before I shoot Kennedy I'll pull out the rifle and shoot him.

He returned to his seat by the window.

People were gathered along the Elm Street ramp in front of the building and in the plaza across the way. He could hear them.

A thrill quivered through his body. He knelt by the window and looked out over the throng thinking: Step right up folks, to the greatest show of a lifetime!

See Lee Harvey Oswald gun U.S. oppression! See the Yankee tyrant die!

Then he heard the nearby worker's footsteps. Good, the guy was leaving. One less problem.

Oswald picked up his rifle again. Keeping it low beside him, he sat near the window again, appraising the curve in Elm Street where the motorcade would have to slow down.

There was some foliage in the way, from an oak tree, but he would have time for one shot below it and several more after the car moved on toward the Triple Underpass.

He had practiced reloading for hours at a time and estimated he could get in four or five shots if necessary.

Now he could hear noise over on Main Street. Cheering. Blocks away yet.

He locked and loaded with one round.

In his head he heard a voice.

"Ready on the right; ready on the left; ready on the firing line." The Marine rifle range chant.

The cheering was growing louder.

He eased the weight of body forward to the window, keeping the weapon just below the sill behind the boxes. It was an uncomfortable position.

Motorcycles were passing. A



car was behind them. No, it wasn't the President, yet.

More motorcycles rounded the corner of Main and Houston, fol-

lowed by another. They turned onto Elm and roared past the Depository.

The din grew deafening as the President's car came into view on Houston.

As the Presidential car moved toward Elm, Lee looked out toward the Triple Underpass and wondered if he would really go through with it. He would almost surely be caught.

His eyes fell on the spot below the oak leaves. He brought the rifle to his shoulder.

With his left eye he could see the President's car, followed by four motorcycles as it passed directly below the window.

He pointed the rifle down and caught the waving figure in the right rear seat with the intersecting cross hairs, followed it forward to the destined spot.

His trigger finger tightened, squeezing. The cross hairs rode along the base of the target.

His hand seemed to lose its strength.

No. He wasn't going to do it. He knew he couldn't pull the trigger any farther.

CRACK!

Everything shook. The target vanished behind the leaves. Pigeons fluttered around the window.

"Damn!" he swore, reloading.

He zeroed in above the branches and fired again as the President, clutching his throat and falling to the side, came into view.

A siren screamed.

Reloading quickly, he fired again.

Looking over the sill, he saw he had hit his mark. He saw a splash of bright red.

Walking quickly along the aisle toward the stairs, Lee fought to suppress the growing sense of panic that had now replaced his tangled hurt.

He waited to feel the happiness he longed for.

As he thrust his rifle between the book cartons he wondered if people might not be wrong — to seek happiness.

Lee Oswald observed that he was not happy as he trotted down the stairs to the fifth floor.

Instead, a sense of panic gripped his mind.